

# Burning in the Sun

One Man's Quest to Provide Workable  
& Affordable Solar Power to the People of Mali

BY KYLEE GEISLER

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this film, visit:  
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Burning in the Sun, a film produced by Birdgirl Productions and distributed by Bullfrog Films, documents the conditions of Mali, Africa and the development of a renewable energy company created from scratch.

The film takes place in Banko Village and focuses primarily on Daniel Dembélé's first customers. Dembélé, a twenty-six year old, African entrepreneur, wants to make a difference in his country. The film proficiently showcases the trials of living without electricity and the hardships Banko's community members face retrieving water. The film explores the difficulties of installing small power stations in this rural African community including rooftop solar panel installation to discussions with officials concerning funding.

Ninety-nine percent of the households in Africa's rural communities do not have electricity and Dembélé's goal is to bring the necessary resources to them. Dembélé started a local company to build solar panels from an assortment of random pieces. Large gas companies like Shell are selling small parts of the solar equipment that are unusable to them to African communities for an incredibly small amount of money. Thus permitting Daniel to build affordable solar panels for rural communities. His primary objective is to make solar power affordable, and to do this he must accomplish a lot with very little.

As viewers, we are on this roller coaster journey with Dembélé, as he starts out with a very small amount of money and limited knowledge about solar panels. Then the crossroads he faces, and ultimately seeing him transform into a successful businessman.

The filmmakers show a step-by-step process of building the solar panels and the careful attention that is put into each one. Banko village has no electricity and the students use lanterns and firelight to study at night. The first project in Banko consisted of installing lights in the schoolhouse. After the installation, the group of workers took a moment to admire it, and we witness the villagers' excitement when the lights are turned on for the first time.

The workers then looked outside and explained that fire is the old way to get light and the electric lights in the school are the new way.

The new solar panels also provide electricity for a water pump and the film documents the challenges the villagers' face each day revolving around the lack of water, and the joy the new water pump brought to the people is immeasurable. Both moments in the village connected the viewers emotionally to their plight and brought a feeling of realness to the events. You get a strong sense of how the new solar panels will benefit everyone in this small rural Mali community.

"Burning in the Sun," explains that renewable energy is a necessity and the film takes the audience on a progressive voyage to bring affordable solar energy to rural communities. Throughout the film the steady advancement of the project unites the audience and brings great pleasure to the viewer when Dembélé and his crew finish the projects in Banko Village.

The moments of humor eased the mood of the film and softened the worried attitudes. The filmmakers did a wonderful job of showing the personalities of all involved. "Burning in the Sun" was not sugar coated and the scenes are eye opening for viewers and, in this viewer, awakened a desire to be more proactive.

Daniel Dembélé is a brave man and an inspiration to many. His company, Afriqpower, now has a clientele including USAID, Geekcorps, and the U.S. Embassy. The company employs orphans and has moved into manufacturing the photovoltaic (PV) modules for solar power systems, and designing and installing the PV systems.

I would highly recommend this film. "Burning in the Sun" is one of the best documentary films I have seen. The development of affordable solar panels is a revolution not only in Africa but also all over the world as we work to bring basic services, like electricity and water, to the world's rural communities.

One year after Dembélé installed lights in the school, the percent of students passing their classes increased by 77 percent. This film is both inspiring and uplifting and makes me wonder why we aren't able to manufacture and install affordable solar panels in this country. •

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*Kylee Geisler is a communications intern with the Western Rural Development Center at Utah State University. She is an undergrad studying Public Relations and Communications.*